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But if the book will not be largely read by the general—as the sprightlier but far less sound and important biography by Lewes is to this day—a large number of its paragraphs will be studied and pondered by those capable of recognizing in it the most dignified monument so far erected to Goethe in the English speaking world and especially by those capable of appreciating it as an admirable vehicle for a realization of the great German's importance as the safest guide and friend for our distraught generation.

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A HISTORY OF MODERN COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH, by Henry Cecil Wyld. New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1920. Pp. xvi+398.

This is a remarkably illuminating and important book, and to readers who have not closely followed the trend of English linguistic study during the past decade or two the conclusions it presents will prove startling. At every turn the reader gets new assurance that this is no mere rewarming of the older discussions of the subject, but a fresh statement based upon a rich collection of data hitherto largely neglected.

The book is divided almost exactly into two halves, the first half containing an introduction, followed by a discussion of dialect types in Middle English and their survival in the modern period, and an examination of English from the fifteenth to the close of the eighteenth century. The greater part of the second half is devoted to a close study of the history of pronunciation in the modern period—the vowels of accentuated syllables, and the vowels of unstressed syllables; to changes in consonantal sounds; and to notes on inflections. The concluding chapter gives a very engaging account of the development of Colloquial Idiom.

Professor Wyld clearly recognizes, as every student of evolution must, that from the nature of the case language does not change overnight, and that while one group of speakers are moving in one direction another group are lagging behind or moving in another direction. And hence at the outset he warns against the tendency, too strong even among professional investigators, to mark off sharply defined periods indicating when the language as a whole entered upon new eras of development.

That the history of English pronunciation is one of extreme difficulty is obvious from the fact that only in our own time has there been even an approximately successful attempt to interpret the often baffling data. Before the researches of Child,

Ellis, and Sweet, practically nothing had been done with the important question as to how English was pronounced in the time of Chaucer and of Shakespeare, and only an occasional comment was made on the obvious differences between Alexander Pope's pronunciations and our own as indicated by his rimes. Then came the monumental work of Ellis and that of Henry Sweet, relying largely upon the old orthoepists, and to a less degree upon rimes in seventeenth and eighteenth century verse. The old orthoepists and grammarians, although obviously destitute in most cases of a rudimentary understanding of phonetics, were treated by Ellis and Sweet with great respect and their decisions carefully registered and compared. Where their statements were blind or confused much ingenuity was employed in making their meaning intelligible and, if possible, consistent. But in a very important passage Professor Wyld points out the change in the attitude of more recent scholars.

"In former days, when those great figures of English Philology Ellis and Sweet were in their prime, these men, and others who followed limpingly in their footsteps, believed it to be possible to construct, almost entirely from the accounts given by the Orthoepists, a fairly exact chronological table of vowel changes, and to say with confidence, such and such was the shade of sound in the sixteenth century, this or that other shade in the seventeenth, yet another in the eighteenth, and so on. As I have already indicated above, I cannot find any such sure foundation in the statements of the old writers upon which Ellis and Sweet relied, and when I compare these statements with the testimony of the other kinds of evidence, I become more than ever distrustful of the results which were formerly accepted so confidently, less inclined to be dogmatic as to the chronology of vowel changes. For one thing, quite recently many scholars have been led to put back the beginnings of the modern vowel system, anything from one to two hundred years earlier than the date to which Ellis and Sweet assigned the rise of this. If this is justified, then it follows, since the formerly-received chronology was almost entirely based upon the testimony of the old grammarians, that these have misled us, and that much of the system of minute chronology derived from them crumbles," p. 190.

Any one who has spent sleepless nights—as the present reviewer must confess to have done—in trying to extract consistent statements from the old orthoepists will read Professor Wyld's declaration of independence with a sigh of relief.

One or two other passages of similar tenor may be cited.

"For the present writer it is a question open to discussion, though many will think this an impiety, whether this new source of information has not been rather a curse than a blessing to

English Philology, and whether we have not been bamboozled for the last thirty or forty years by these early writers on English pronunciation, into all sorts of wrong ideas," p. 99.

And in another place where he takes up the seventeenth century "authorities" he comments:

"The great difficulty with all these writers, supposing that some definite conception can be gathered from their statements, is to decide how far their accounts are reliable . . . . The safest test to apply is that of the evidence derived from the Verneys, Mrs. Basire, and the Wentworths. Pronunciations which recur in these sources, but which are nevertheless characterized as vulgar, careless, or barbarous, by the grammarians, may safely be accepted as belonging to the Received Standard of the day," p. 168.

This safer evidence brings us to the most distinctive feature of Professor Wyld's book, the critical study of old spellings. Probably every thoughtful modern reader of old books has stumbled upon spellings clearly indicating a pronunciation different from that of his time and has jotted them down without venturing to make a systematic collection. In Ðiehl's *Englische Schreibung und Aussprache* and in Zachrisson's notable examination of the English vowels in *Englische Studien*, lii, 299 ff., considerable use is made of this source of information.

But Professor Wyld, in the wide range of his investigation and in the critical skill with which he sifts his material, easily distances his predecessors. He lays emphasis upon the fact that the spoken language is the real speech and that carefully written documents and literature printed in conventional spelling furnish comparatively slight evidence as to the actual contemporary pronunciation. This evidence, on the other hand, he finds abundantly in familiar letters, in diaries, and in memoranda obviously intended for the eye of the writer only. Before the printers and lexicographers imposed their standards, average men and women wrote as they best could, producing strange combinations to represent phonetically the sounds they intended. We might almost say, the worse their spelling, the better, for the less conventional it is, provided only it is phonetic, the more illuminating it is. Obviously, the spellings of no single writer can be cited as conclusive evidence for any pronunciation. He or she may be exceptionally provincial, but one bit of evidence confirms or corrects another, and the concurrent proof that independent writers of a recognized social class pronounced in a certain fashion becomes at length entirely convincing. The very fact that the writers are not trained phoneticians and that they are caught off their guard gives us confidence that we may trust their unintentional testimony.

Fortunately, too, the old orthoepists themselves often confirm our conclusions. "We might disbelieve, or hesitate as to

the interpretation of any one authority, if unsupported by other evidence, but when all tell the same tale, when we find Pope rhyming *neglects* with *sex*, the Verney ladies and Lady Wentworth writing *respeck*, *prospeck*, *strick*, and so on, and the writers on pronunciation before, after, and contemporary with these personages deliberately stating that final *t* is omitted in a long list of words which includes the above, then we must admit that if all this is not conclusive evidence on the point, it will be impossible ever to get any reliable information regarding the modes of speech of past ages.

But the case for taking these various indications seriously becomes stronger when we discover that the existence of many of these, to us, peculiar pronunciations is established by occasional spellings reaching far back to the fifteenth century, and beyond that into the M. E. period itself," pp. 283, 284.

The significance of the conclusions deduced from these spellings the author had already outlined on pp. 70-71: "The net result of an examination of English speech as a whole during the fifteenth century leads us to the conclusion that before the close of that century, not to attempt more particular definition, the Modern Period of our language had begun."

Throughout the book the argument is cumulative and on the whole far stronger than if it rested upon the dictum of a professed orthoepist or two who might mistake his preferences for the best usage of his time. Needless to remark, the investigation is often complicated rather than helped by the old orthoepists. But through all the maze the author never loses the thread and he combines all the evidence in a plausible, if not in every case demonstrable, conclusion. An excellent example of his ingenious and cautious reasoning appears in the account of the chronology of vowel changes, pp. 191–194, and in the detailed discussion that follows, up to the concluding chapter on Colloquial Idiom.

To readers who have given little attention to the history of English pronunciation the book will bring many interesting surprises. A single instance must suffice:

"At the present time in the Received Standard as spoken in the South and Midlands, and in the Regional dialects of these areas, no distinction is made between *whine* and *wine*, between *which* and *witch*, *white* and *Wight*, etc. The only exceptions are those speakers who have been subjected to Scotch or Irish influence, or who have deliberately chosen to depart from the normal practice for their own private satisfaction," p. 311.

Well-bred American speakers may vainly resent the undoubted facts presented in the foregoing passage, but in any case they will not be likely to follow the example of their English cousins. American and Colonial English lies outside the author's field, and he wisely refrains from complicating his

survey by attempting an interminable task. But no historian of American speech can venture to neglect this notable examination of everyday English, in which more than one so-called Americanism is found to have most respectable English ancestry.

As for the book as a whole, it is too much to expect that Professor Wyld's solutions of thorny problems will in every case win universal assent, though it is not too much to say that he approaches no disputed question without a critical sifting of all available data. In no case does he attempt to slur the difficulties in the way of attaining certainty in these matters, and in the spirit of modest scholarship he frankly presents various problems for which he has as yet no satisfactory solution. The study of the history of English as a living, spoken language is indeed so modern that a multitude of questions still remain untouched.

"Among the general problems still to be solved may be mentioned:—the precise extent and character of both Regional and Class dialect influence upon Received Standard during the seventeenth and eighteenth centures; the divorce of prose style from the colloquial language of the day which may appear in any language from time to time, and which research might possibly show occurred among the latest Elizabethans and their immediate successors, and again towards the end of the eighteenth century; the precise linguistic results, if any, of the Civil Wars upon our language, whether in conducing to laxity of pronunciation and grammar, or in modifying the diction of conversation or of literature; the beginnings of the reaction in favour of the 'regular and solemn' style of pronunciation and grammar, and the progress of this movement in colloquial and literary English down, roughly, to the Early Victorian period; the rise of bogus pronunciations, based purely on the spelling, among persons who were ignorant of the best traditional usage; the gradual process by which many of these obtained currency among the better classes. . . . . The whole question of unstressed vowels is a virgin field for the young investigator. . . . It would be an interesting inquiry how far the falling off in the quality of prose style among the generality of writers after the third quarter of the eighteenth century is related to social developments," pp. 187, 188. "The whole question of Modern lengthenings and shortenings requires special investigation, which at present is lacking," p. 257.

This list might easily be extended, but here is surely enough to satisfy a reasonable appetite for years to come.

In this ingenious and stimulating book we have found much to admire and little to blame. The workmanship is careful throughout. Misprints are very rare. *Furnivall* appears correctly on p. xii, on pp. 86, 89, *Furnival*. In a few pages a letter is blurred or obliterated, but for this the author can hardly be censured.

But to most readers the lack of an index will seem very regrettable. In searching for some particular word one may now spend an hour without finding it. Doubtless an index was considered and ultimately rejected, partly because of the enormous labor it would cost and partly because of the inevitable added expense. But the very fact that the labor would be great is a convincing reason why an index should be added without undue delay. No reader can hold in mind all the scattered facts, and they are too important to be allowed to suffer neglect.

Whatever the judgment on these and some other details this is assuredly a book that no student of English speech can safely neglect. And even the general reader, notwithstanding the technical character of many of the discussions, may derive great pleasure and profit from a multitude of passages. The style is never dry and the author is no pedant. Even a novice may be allured into the study of old-fashioned English after reading a passage like the following: "Do we realize that if we could, by the workings of some Time Machine, be suddenly transported back into the seventeenth century, most of us would find it extremely difficult to carry on, even among the kind of people most nearly corresponding with those with whom we are habitually associated in our present age, the simplest kind of decent social intercourse? Even if the pronunciation of the sixteenth century offered no difficulty, almost every other element which goes to make up the medium of communication with our fellows would do so.

We should not know how to greet or take leave of those we met, how to express our thanks in an acceptable manner, how to ask a favour, pay a compliment, or send a polite message to a gentleman's wife. We should be at a loss how to begin and end the simplest note, whether to an intimate friend, a near relative, or to a stranger. We could not scold a footman, commend a child, express in appropriate terms admiration for a woman's beauty, or aversion to the opposite quality. We should hesitate every moment how to address the person we were talking to, and should be embarrassed for the equivalent of such instinctive phrases as—look here, old man; my dear chap; my dear Sir; excuse me; I beg your pardon; I'm awfully sorry; Oh, not at all; that's too bad; that's most amusing; you see; don't you know; and a hundred other trivial and meaningless expressions with which most men fill out their sentences," p. 360. And there are scores of other passages hardly less enlivening.

Readers unaccustomed to phonetic discussion will do well to begin with the chapter on Colloquial Idiom, of which the foregoing passage is a part, and then take up the chapter on the English of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,

along with the introductory chapter. The impetus thus gained will be likely to carry them through the book.

When may we hope to have a treatment of Colloquial American English equally authoritative and delightful?

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Gudmund Schütte: *OFFERPLADSER I OVERLEVERING OG STEDMINDER.* Studier fra Sprog og Oldtidsforskning no. 112. V. Pios Boghandel, Kjöbenhavn, 1918.

The object of the author has been, through a comparative study of historical, archeological, and legendary sources, and of place names, to localize the sacrificial places of pagan Denmark and to suggest further problems for a systematic investigation of the centers of early worship thus established.

After a brief review of the earlier work in the same field, Mr. Schütte passes to a survey of Classical evidence concerning the large general sacrifices (*masseofringer*) in Central Europe. This section is little more than a summary of Worsaae: *Almindelige Bemaerkninger om Betydningen av vore store Mosefund fra den aeldre Jernalder. Vidensk. Selsk. Forhandlinger* 1867, p. 242 ff., referred to by the author. Mr. Schütte finds no references to Scandinavian customs, but cites such accounts of Gallic and Germanic rites as may throw light on the situation in Denmark.

The author next approaches the sacrifice of special works of art, either singly or in pairs. He cites the report of Strabo that the Cimbri, terrified by the landing of the Roman fleet in Jutland, A. D. 5, sent to Augustus their most sacred sacrificial bowl. This he considers a sacrifice to appease the angry gods. The emperor, a god even to the Romans, certainly would appear as such to the Cimbri. As a parallel he suggests the silver bowl of Gundestrup bog.[1]

The instances hardly seem parallel. The first is an offering to buy off an hostile attack; the second is the deposit in a bog of the sacrificial object broken in such a way as to be of no further use. The custom of destroying sacrificial objects thus deposited is familiar; its significance is unknown. At all events the two cases, granted that they are parallel, would hardly justify Mr. Schütte's establishment of a localized sacrificial type, "det kimbriske kedeloffer" (i. e., the Cimbric Bowl offering).

In the same group, he places the "sun-chariot" of Trundholm Bog, the two Dejberg Waggons, the Langaa Waggon, and the two gold horns of Gallehus. In the first and last case

[1] Sophus Müller: *Vor Oldtid*, p. 572.